



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Fred Keller (R-PA), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
“Children at Risk: Examining Workplace Protections for Child Farmworkers”
September 7, 2022**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Agriculture provides valuable opportunities for young people in rural areas across the country. As a nation, we should be encouraging more young Americans to pursue a career in farming, not discouraging them. Today, the average farmer is nearly 60 years old—this could cause massive problems in the agricultural industry in just a few years.

“The title of today’s hearing is Children at Risk: Examining Workplace Protections for Child Farmworkers. Children are at risk in America because of policies that have led to fentanyl pouring across an open border, record high inflation, and parents unable to afford essentials for their children.

“Children are at risk from the spending in Washington D.C. that we’ve seen happening over the past few years under one party rule from the Democrats and the Biden Administration.

“As a young child, I worked on a farm. I was 14 or 15 years old, and I helped bale hay and do chores. I learned a lot of things farming. I learned things that were important to me when I was a youngster and I learned things that benefited me later in life.

“I’m reminded of a speech by Paul Harvey—a radio personality—in 1978 that described all of the qualities of the American farmer:

“And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, I need a caretaker.

“So God made a farmer.

“God said, I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper, then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board.

“So God made a farmer.

“I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild; somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, come home hungry, have to wait lunch until his wife’s done feeding visiting ladies, then tell the ladies to be sure and come back real soon—and mean it.

"So God made a farmer.

"God said, I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt, and watch it die, then dry his eyes and say, maybe next year. I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps; who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, and then pain'n from tractor back, put in another seventy-two hours.

"So God made a farmer.

"God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds, and yet stop in mid-field and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbor's place.

"So God made a farmer.

"God said, I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bails, yet gentle enough to tame lambs and wean pigs and tend the pink-combed pullets, who will stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadow lark.

"It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners; somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church; somebody who would bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh, and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son says that he wants to spend his life doing what dad does.

"So God made a farmer.

"I worked on a farm, and I know how much the farmer that later became my stepdad cared about other people. We should be focusing on the issues I mentioned first that are putting our children at risk: an open border, record high inflation, and growing debt. If we want our kids to have it better off than we did, those are things that we should be focused on."

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